

PATENT APPLICATION

PILLOW BLANKET**BACKGROUND OF INVENTION**

This invention relates generally to blankets that can be converted into a pillow without a stuff sack. More particularly, this invention pertains to blankets used in a seated or standing position that wraps from the anterior to the posterior of the user.

A variety of blanket constructions for use in an upright position evolved over many years. To keep a person warm while sitting upright in a chair or wheel chair, it is known to provide children with sleepers and also to provide sleeping bag-like structures with sleeves attached. However the restrictions presented by the use of a sleeper or bag would not work for a wheelchair bound person. Also, it is known to provide a blanket having one pocket permanently attached to one elongated edge of a blanket for permitting the blanket to be folded, rolled and tucked into the pocket to convert the blanket into a pillow as in U.S. Patent No. 5,987,667 to Haverly et al. Another example is U.S. Patent No. 5,245,717 to Rudy that provides a blanket with sleeves to facilitate reading a book and a pocket attached to the blanket. More commonly, a regular blanket is draped over the front side of an elderly wheelchair patient's lap to warm lap and legs. However, known blanket constructions have several drawbacks.

Traditional blankets require an extra article for storage, the stuff sack itself, which can be inconvenient to find or use. A blanket that can be folded into a pillow oftentimes looks sloppy, asymmetrical and lumpy. Some blanket users in a wheelchair complain of cold feet with a blanket that doesn't extend down far enough to cover their feet or fails to remain covered. Other times the blanket is too long and gets caught underneath the

front wheels of the wheelchair. Some stiff or immobile blanket users are forced to depend upon and wait for support staff assistance to tuck the blanket underneath the feet repeatedly. Many of the known blanket constructions employ the full wrap-around design which is extremely troublesome with wheelchair, bedridden, or incontinent users. Even if a full wrap-around design is not used, hard to reach and to manipulate straps, strings, and other connecting means are commonly used and located on the upright user's back to keep the blanket from falling forward or off that sitting or standing user.

A new blanket construction is needed to overcome those disadvantages and to provide an easier way of putting on, keeping on, and taking off a blanket, while providing more warmth protection to the upright user's anterior and lateral sides, from the user's neck down through the arms and legs to the feet.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It, therefore, is an object of this invention to provide a blanket construction for a variety of users engaged in a variety of activities, including a hospital patient in a wheelchair crocheting, a student in a dorm room studying, a driver in an initially cold car traveling in winter, or a spectator seated at a fall outdoor sporting event.

Another objective of the invention is to provide a blanket that reduces exposed areas over a wheelchair patient's neck, arms or feet.

A further objective is to provide a blanket that is easier for another person, such as a hospital support staff member, to put on and to take off an upright user.

An additional objective is to provide a blanket constructed to be easier to put on and kept on by a stiff or impaired mobility wearer.

A related objective of the invention is to provide a blanket which is firmly held over and onto the user's arms during normal work and play activities by the seated user without the need to tie strings or use retaining clips, safety pins and the like.

A further objective of the invention is to provide a blanket which is easily and neatly folded into a pillow, allowing the user to create a symmetrical pillow for decoration or for use as a headrest, footrest, lumbar support, seat cushion or lap tray.

The pillow blanket is used for covering from neck to feet the user in an upright position. The pillow blanket comprises a blanket, foot pocket and pair of sleeves. The substantially rectangular blanket has a planar first surface and a planar second surface. The blanket also has two opposing first and second side edges and two opposing top and bottom edges that are shorter than the two opposing side edges. The blanket has a first rounded corner at the intersection of the bottom edge and the first side edge of the blanket. The blanket also has a second rounded corner at the intersection of the bottom edge and the second side edge of the blanket both for improving the result of folding the blanket into the foot pocket.

The blanket defines a pair of sleeve apertures in the half portion of the blanket adjacent to the top edge of the blanket. Each of the sleeve apertures has an oblong shape for facilitating freedom of arm movement within the sleeve. Each of the sleeve apertures has an oblique orientation relative to a horizontal centerline to facilitate arm movement. The horizontal centerline is defined by a line that runs through the pair of sleeves and is parallel to the top edge of the blanket. The first and second sleeve apertures are spaced apart along the horizontal centerline at a predetermined length so that the blanket lies flat across the chest of the user. The blanket also has a neck

portion. The neck portion has predetermined length between each of the pair of sleeves and the to edge of the blanket so that the neck portion covers the user's neck without the need of fasteners.

The foot pocket comprises a pocket panel. The pocket panel has two opposing first and second edges and two opposing top and bottom edges. The pocket panel is connected to the blanket at the first edge, second edge, and bottom edge of the pocket panel. The bottom edge of the pocket panel coincides with both the middle third portion of and the bottom edge of the blanket for warming feet and for converting the blanket into a pillow. The width of the pocket panel is approximately a third of the width of the blanket.

A pair of first and second sleeves is connected to the perimeter of the first and second apertures on the blanket. The pair of first and second sleeves each includes an expandable first and second cuff for accommodating a variety of sleeve lengths and fist sizes.

These and other objects, advantages and features of the invention will be readily understood by a reading of the following description in conjunction with the accompanying figures of the drawings wherein like reference numerals have been applied to designate like elements throughout the several views.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the pillow blanket of the present invention in use on a wheelchair;

Figure 2 is a rear side elevational view of an embodiment of the invention showing the foot pocket and open cuffs;

Figure 3 is a perspective view of an open pillow blanket, viewed from the opposite side shown in Figure 2, showing the starting position in a process of folding the blanket into a pillow;

Figure 4 is a step, subsequent to the step in Figure 3, which includes tucking the rounded corners into the pocket and folding the blanket lengthwise into thirds;

Figure 5 is a perspective view of a step, subsequent to the step in Figure 4, which includes folding the first and second sleeves over the middle third portion of the blanket 12; and

Figure 6 shows the last step of folding the blanket into four equal sections and tucking the folded pillow blanket into the foot pocket.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

With reference to the drawings, in particular to Figures 1 and 2, the pillow blanket 10 of the present invention, as opposed to a mere blanket, is depicted as including a blanket 12, a foot pocket 18, and a pair of first and second sleeves 70, 72. The pillow blanket invention is used for putting on, taking off, and keeping on without fasteners, a covering from neck to feet of a user in an upright position. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the pillow blanket 10 is generally rectangular in shape and is made of any suitable material such as fleece.

The substantially rectangular blanket 12 of the pillow blanket 10 has a planar first face 20 and a planar second face 22. The blanket 12 is defined by two opposing first and second side edges 24, 26 and two opposing top and bottom edges 28, 30 which are shorter than the two opposing side edges 24, 26. The blanket 12 can be folded into three equal portions, the middle third portion 80 of blanket 12 is coincident with the longitudinal centerline 36 as best seen in figure 4 and figure 2. The blanket 12 has a first rounded corner 32 at the intersection of the bottom edge 30 and the first side edge 24 of the blanket 12. The blanket 12 also has a second rounded corner 34 at the intersection of the bottom edge 30 and the second side edge 26 of the blanket 12 for improving the ease of folding the blanket 12 into the foot pocket 18.

The blanket 12 also defines a pair of first and second sleeve apertures 40, 50. The sleeve apertures 40, 50 are located in the half portion of the blanket 12 adjacent to the top edge 28 of the blanket 12. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, each of the first and second sleeve apertures 40, 50 have an oblong shape for facilitating improved freedom of arm movement within the sleeve. The oblong shape of each of the sleeve apertures 40, 50 has an oblique orientation relative to a horizontal centerline 38 to accommodate a wider range of arm movement. The horizontal centerline 38 defines a line that runs through the first sleeve aperture 40 and second sleeve aperture 50, parallel to the top edge 28 of the said blanket 12 and perpendicular to the longitudinal centerline 36.

The first and second sleeve apertures 70, 72 are spaced apart along the horizontal centerline 38 at a predetermined length, such as 2 feet, so that the blanket 12 lies flat across the chest of the user. The blanket 12 also provides a neck portion 52.

The neck portion has a predetermined length, such as one foot, between either the first or second sleeve apertures 40, 50 and the top edge 28 of the blanket 12 so that the neck portion 52 covers the user's neck without the need for fasteners.

The foot pocket 18 of the pillow blanket 10 comprises a pocket panel 19. The pocket panel 19 has two opposing first and second edges 62, 64 and two opposing top and bottom edges 68, 66 as best seen in figure 2. The pocket panel 19 is connected to the blanket 12 at the first edge 62, second edge 64 and bottom edge 66 of the pocket panel 19. The bottom edge 66 of the pocket panel 19 coincides with both the middle third portion 80 and the bottom edge 30 of the blanket 12 for warming feet and for converting the blanket into a pillow. In the preferred embodiment of the invention the pocket panel 19 has a square shape. Similarly, the width of the pocket panel 19 would be approximately 1/3 of the width of the blanket 12, the distance of top edge 28 of the blanket 12.

A pair of first and second sleeves 70, 72 is also provided by the pillow blanket 10. Each of the first and second sleeves 70 and 72 is connected to the perimeter of the respective first and second sleeve apertures 40, 50 on the blanket 12. The first sleeve 70 includes an expandable first cuff 74 for accommodating a variety of sleeve lengths and cuff widths. Similarly the second sleeve 72 includes an expandable cuff 76 for narrow or wide wrists, and slender or swollen, arthritically knarled fists.

One working example for a preferred embodiment of the present invention provides for a blanket 12 having a top edge 28 of 60 inches and a length of 72 inches. Along the elongated axis of the first sleeve aperture 40 is a distance of 13 inches from the top of first sleeve aperture 42 to the bottom of first sleeve aperture 44,. The second

sleeve aperture 50 has the same 13 inches length but not necessarily the same orientation as the first sleeve aperture 40. The first sleeve 70 has a length of 21 inches from the first sleeve aperture to the outer most edge of the first cuff 74. The diameter of the expandable first cuff 74 is 5 inches and the length of the first cuff 74 is 2.5 inches. The spaced apart distance of the chest portion 54 measured between the first sleeve aperture 40 and the second sleeve aperture 50 is 24 inches. The neck portion 52 of the blanket from the horizontal centerline 38 to the top edge 28 of the blanket is 12 inches. The pocket panel 19 of the foot pocket 18 has first and second edge 62, 64 distances of 18 inches. The top edge 68 and bottom edge 66 would also have distance of 18 inches.

One preferred way of making the foot pocket 18 is to provide a blanket 12 having a top edge 28 of 60 inches, a length of 72 inches, first and second rounded corners 32, 34 and an extended flap in the outline of the pocket panel 19 with a height of 18 inches and a length of 18 inches. Next, fold the pocket panel 19 upwardly and stitch the pocket panel 19 to the blanket 12 at the first edge 62 and the second edge 64 of the pocket panel 19. The folded bottom edge 66 of the pocket panel 19 has a unitary connection with the blanket 12; the top edge 68 of the pocket panel 19 is left unsecured for receiving the user's feet.

Figures 3 through 6 show a preferred method for converting a blanket into a pillow comprising the following steps. First provide a pillow blanket 10 as described above and as shown in figure 2. Next, lay out the pillow blanket 10 with the planar first face 20 contacting the ground and the first and second sleeves 70, 72 contacting the ground and extending away from each of the sleeves 70, 72. As shown in figure 3, fold over the entire foot pocket 18 onto the planar second face 22 of the blanket 12. Then

fold the pillow blanket 10 into three lengthwise portions with the first side edge 24 and second side edge 26 of the blanket 12 placed over the middle third portion 80 of the blanket 12 as shown in figure 4. Tuck the first rounded corner 32 and the second rounded corner 34 into the foot pocket 18. As shown in figure 5, fold the first and second sleeves 70, 72 over the middle third portion 80 of the blanket 12. As shown in figure 6, fold the blanket into lengths substantially similar to the length of foot pocket 18. Finally tuck the folded blanket into the foot pocket 18. The result is a pillow having a smooth, symmetrical shape for decoration or use as a headrest, footrest, lumbar support, seat cushion or lap tray.

To put on or wear the pillow blanket, the user is presented with a view substantially similar to the view of Figure 2 with the foot pocket 18 facing the user and the pair of first and second sleeves 40,50 extending outwardly away from the user. The user's feet are placed inside the foot pocket 18 and the two remaining rounded corners 32,34 of the blanket 12 are tucked inside the foot pocket 18 behind the calves of the user's legs. The planar first face 20 of the blanket 12 from an open, unfolded position is placed over the user's anterior as shown in figures 2 and 1. The pocket panel 19 faces the user. The first sleeve 70 and the second sleeve 72 extend away from the user and the planar second face 22 of the pillow blanket 10. The arms of the user are extended through the first and second sleeves 70, 72. The first cuff 74 and second cuff 76 can be placed anywhere along the arms from the wrist up to bicep depending upon how warm and how active the user wants to be. The sleeves 70, 72 and the cuff 74, 76 serve as the primary means of keeping the blanket on the user without the use of other fasteners

which may be hard to reach. The neck portion 52 of the blanket 12 is placed with top edge 28 of the blanket 12 under the chin of the user.

To use the foot pocket 18 feature, insert both of the user's feet into the foot pocket 18 with the pocket panel 19 pressed against the calves of the user. Then tuck the first rounded corner 32 and second rounded corner 34 between the user's calves and the pocket panel 19. Tucking the corners 32, 34 into the pocket panel 19 is especially advantageous for reducing the chance of the bottom edge 30 of the blanket 12 dragging on the floor or getting caught by or in the front wheels of the wheel chair.

The pillow blanket 10 construction of the invention results in a blanket 12 which is worn over a seated user's anterior and lateral sides extending from over the neck, chest, arms, lap, legs, through the feet. The wide cuffed sleeve offers one-size-fits-all convenience. The wide cuffed sleeve can be worn as a full sleeve or half sleeve depending upon the warmth desired. The wide cuffed sleeve provides mobility for hands-on activities such as crocheting or playing cards. The wide cuffed sleeve helps keep the blanket from falling onto the ground and thus reduces the inconvenience of lost self-sufficiency waiting for a hospital staff member to come to the room to retrieve the blanket from the floor. Worse yet, the fallen blanket may become a contaminated reservoir of germs to the user from laying upon an unsanitary public hospital or nursing home floor and subsequently being held close to the user.

The foot pocket 18 allows the user to quickly put the pillow blanket 10 away after use. It allows a user to create a smooth, neat, symmetrical pillow for decorative or functional uses such as a headrest, footrest, lumbar support, seat cushion or lap tray.

The foot pocket 18 provides the blanket 12 with additional warmth by way of a confined area for the user's feet. Alternatively, the foot pocket 18 could be used to provide storage if not used for foot warmth. The two rounded corners 32, 34 on the blanket 12 itself allow the user to fold the blanket 12 into a pillow more easily to form a more symmetrical pillow.

The use of the fleece pillow blanket 10 material maximizes warmth and minimizes the bulk and weight of the insulating material used. The fleece blanket provides durable performance and advantageous washing qualities for a longer product life. The fleece blanket offers a soft nap for use as a blanket or pillow and is also helpful in cool indoor areas when conserving energy with a lower than normal temperature thermostat setting.

Even when used on relatively immobile and inflexible users, the pillow blanket 10 is easy to put on, and it stays on until the wearer or the hospital support staff intentionally removes it. The use of clips, straps, or other attachment means needed to keep the blanket on the user is avoided.

The pillow blanket 10 of the present invention is easily made from conventional fabrics and materials. Available materials such as fleece or POLAR FLEECE™, provide a high insulating value in a thin layer, are readily incorporated into the blanket.

Another preferred alternative embodiment of the invention provide a blanket 12 defining first and second sleeve apertures 40, 50 having a substantially vertical orientation relative to the horizontal centerline 38.

It is anticipated that various changes and modifications may be made in the construction, arrangement and method of construction of the pillow blanket disclosed

herein without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the following claims: